

MINUTES OF THE QUARTERLY MEETING OF THE STR ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2020 VIA WEBEX

**I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL (5:36 pm)**

Committee Members Present: Bruce, Moran, Nash-Hunt, Stockness

City Staff: Naffah, Zetter

**II. ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR**

Committee member Nash-Hunt welcomed Planning Commissioner Stockness to the STR Committee.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*January 09, 2020*

***Motion (Moran/Nash-Hunt) to approve the January 09, 2020 minutes as submitted (4-0).***

**IV. AGENDA ITEMS**

1. Discuss Staff Report on the Results of the 2020 Application/Renewal Process Detailing Any Problems, Concerns, or Improvements from the Prior Year:

*Committee Member Discussion:*

City staff Zetter corrected the staff report to indicate that there are 5 short-term rentals in the SR zone and 20 in the UR zone.

Committee Chair Bruce discussed the staff report, which provided information pertaining to the conclusion of the 2020 Application/Renewal Process.

Committee member Nash-Hunt questioned if refile for 2021 is going to be as cumbersome as 2020 for staff, as permits weren't issued until May 2020. She questioned the necessity of having to remove documents from previous years to include in the new application. She did, however, note that she appreciated the streamlined process for the applicant, as it was much easier. In response, Zetter explained that the documents that the City is not requiring the applicant to resubmit still need to be provided to the City Building Inspector. The City's Building Inspector must review the plans prior to the site visit to ensure that nothing has changed and wasn't reported.

Planning Commissioner Stockness discussed that staff is thorough with the applications, in order to ensure that they are up to the City's standards, so they will not have to reach out multiple times to the owner. She also acknowledged that all STR owners, especially new applicants, need to understand that having a license is a privilege, so their application material should be acceptable the first time.

Committee member Moran advised he appreciated the streamlined application process for 2020, and agreed with Nash-Hunt that the process was easier for the applicant and is hopeful that it is for City staff. He agreed with Stockness that the new applicants need to be thorough when applying for a license, but as there currently aren't new applications the main concern is dialing in the proper cost.

Bruce questioned if the cost-tracking sheets that were recommended by the Committee and approved by the City Council were used. City staff Zetter and City Manager Naffah explained that they hadn't been used because at the time of their approval, the licensing process was already underway and

wouldn't have reflected an accurate cost. Bruce requested the staff begin using the sheet to track the cost, and to make modifications to the sheets, if necessary. He acknowledged that the information would likely need to be transferred to a spreadsheet. Nash-Hunt advised she would like to see the cost-tracking sheets once composed. Staff advised cost tracking will begin for the new year, and would make them available for the STR Committee to review. Nash-Hunt advised that it would be beneficial to begin tracking the troublesome STRs that take up more time. Moran requested clarification on whether or not if the cost-tracking sheets are solely for the permitting process. Bruce clarified that there are two cost tracking sheets – one for cost recovery and one specific to the permitting process.

Stockness advised that with COVID-19 there may be items that need to be logged, as time has been spent on STRs in general. She added that during the initial fee analysis the proposed STR fee was \$500 at the Planning Commission level, but the City Council decided on \$300.

Bruce discussed that residents had received the STR contact list from the City and complimented staff for including zoning information on the list. Stockness and Nash-Hunt echoed Bruce's sentiment.

Bruce also discussed the concerns section in the staff report, which included the suggestion that the City Council examine the public records request process for STRs, because by compiling records in a piecemeal fashion a higher probability that documents can be misplaced is created. It was suggested by staff that public records requests regarding STR applications be completed after all licenses are issued, as hours of staff time would have been saved. Additionally, by providing this information prior to completion, it creates a situation where only one individual has this information before all other residents, including the license holders.

Nash-Hunt requested clarification on whether a member of the public could review the documents at their leisure at Town Hall without having copies made. Staff confirmed they can review the documents for free at Town Hall, and that copies require a small fee. PRR cost tracking and processing documents for PRRs were discussed. Stockness stated she agrees with staff, specifically that the process for the PRR requests during the licensing process should be completed after all licenses have been issued, as it takes too much away from productive staff time.

*Public Comment*

None

2. Discuss Staff Report on Citizen Complaints and the Resolution of Those Complaints Covering the Period of January 1 through April 30, 2020:

*Committee Member Discussion*

Bruce advised that no complaints against STRs have been submitted to the City's Clerk's office from January 1, 2020 through April 30, 2020. No further discussion occurred.

*Public Comment*

None

3. Discuss the Status of the Current Moratorium on STR Rentals in Trinidad and Its Impact on the City:

*Committee Member Discussion:*

City Manager Naffah advised that the City informed all license holders that they must notify the City if they received potential reservations from essential workers. This was done as the owners/property managers need to notify the City in order to get approval, due to the Moratorium that is in effect. He further added that some of the STRs have been turned into long-term rentals or have family members that are being isolated during the shelter-in-place. He also noted that activity has been limited, and rather sporadic. Committee Chair Bruce confirmed with Naffah that the City's Moratorium falls in line with state and county regulations. Bruce went on to question if the State of California is moving towards reopening STRs, and what steps the County of Humboldt is imposing on the cities in terms of the slow reopening. Naffah advised the State has not finished the first phase of stage two, but that they are now moving into the second half of phase two. Naffah clarified, however, that the County is allowing County residents and essential workers, but has not given the green light to open up to out-of-County travelers.

Planning Commissioner Stockness questioned if STRs would be reopened in phase three for the County. Naffah advised that he does not have all the details regarding each phase.

Committee member Moran advised that STRs are geared to open in phase three, as leisure travel will open. He explained that phase 2 is only for essential workers in the County, but clarified there is a clause for County residents. He explained that the point is to limit individuals coming from out of the county. Additionally, when phase three goes into effect it is up to the state.

Moran stated that his property management company has had to turn a substantial amount of business away, and even has had to perform repayment. Despite this, he stated he feels good about working with the City to vet potential renters.

Bruce advised that the written comment received from J. Kitchen, one of the owners of Trinidad Retreats, should be addressed, specifically the 60-day minimum activity for an STR requirement, as some rentals have pivoted from an STR to LTR. He noted that it does not appear that there will be a peak tourist season this year, and if the County and City's moratorium remain in affect, unless the City Council passes a resolution indicating a suspension, all of the STRs will be in violation. Due to this, he recommended that the Committee pass along a recommendation to the City Council to waive the requirement.

All were in favor of the recommendation to suspend the 60-day minimum activity requirement.

***Motion (Nash-Hunt/Moran) to make a recommendation to the City Council that they suspend the 60-day minimum activity as required in the ordinance, due to the Moratorium on STRs, for this year and any future years that the moratorium is in place. Passed (4-0). Passed unanimously.***

A discussion regarding the process of reopening occurred.

Stockness questioned if there would be restrictions in place when the STRs reopen. City Manager Naffah advised that it depends on both the state and county.

Stockness and Nash-Hunt discussed how J. Kitchen made valid points. Stockness advised she is in favor of reopening STRs because it is a large part of the City's economy and many residents' livelihoods. Stockness acknowledged that while she is in favor of reopening, restrictions must be in place. Bruce advised that it's important to discuss the "new normal." He went on to state that meet

and greets will need to be somewhat flexible, but is not ready to make any recommendations at this point in time.

Moran noted, however, that currently, all reservations are healthcare workers, so it needs to be addressed now. He added that he recommends a recommendation be given to the City Council that they suspend meet and greets, as required in the ordinance, due to the Moratorium on STRs. Nash-Hunt noted that she agrees, and that it needs to be acknowledged that STRs are a unique way to isolate during shelter-in-place.

Stockness noted that she is still in favor of meet and greets, explaining that as a resident in town she believes that it is beneficial. She added that meet and greets should be fine if distancing is practiced.

Bruce advised that the committee has had a lot of discussion in the past, and he feels that the meet and greets are important. However, there is reason to perhaps suspend the requirement, but make modifications because of the new normal. Moran advised that property managers have different platforms for communication, for example text messages or phone calls.

Nash-Hunt advised Stockness that there have been discussions in the past on how to handle repeat guests, and when guests arrive at midnight. She noted that this is currently not an appropriate time to discuss this, but wants to remind the Committee that it does need to be addressed.

Stockness questioned if the property managers/owners have a way to identify the guests. She stated she is unsure if she can vote to suspend the meet and greets, however she is concerned about health and safety. Moran proposed that an option is not to have a full suspension, but instead have the good neighbor brochure provided in the rental agreement online. This could also include having a good neighbor brochure provided at the location, instead of in-person delivery at the time of arrival. A discussion occurred on how to handle the good neighbor brochure when guests do not go through an electronic process.

***Motion (Moran/Nash-Hunt) to recommend to the City Council that they suspend the meet and greet as required in the ordinance, during the Moratorium on STRs, as long as the good neighbor agreement brochure is provided electronically or by mail to the guests with the initial rental agreement. Passed (3-1). Ayes: Bruce, Nash-Hunt, Moran; Noes: Stockness***

Stockness questioned how, as a resident, she could confirm they signed an agreement. A discussion between committee members occurred. Moran advised that when the reservation process is done electronically, the guest cannot pay without signing. He noted that they do not receive a copy of the checked box, but instead receive confirmation that the reservation went through.

Bruce raised the issue that the City is going to lose Tourist Occupancy Tax. City Manager Naffah advised that during June 2020 City Council meetings the budget will be discussed. He added that initially for the first quarter TOT wasn't heavily impacted, but the second quarter has been. He advised that July will give the City a better idea of what the outlook is. Stockness questioned if there will be funding for relief. Naffah advised that is up to the State of California and the Federal Government. He discussed a current stimulus package proposal that is before the House of Representatives.

#### *Public Comment*

None

4. Continue Discussion on Cost Effective Ways to Improve Compliance/Enforcement of the STR Ordinance as Currently Written:

*Committee Member Discussion:*

Bruce discussed that the City Council directed the STR Committee to come up with recommendations on cost effective ways to improve compliance/enforcement of the STR ordinance as currently written. He added that at the last City Council meeting the Committee recommended holding a best practices workshop, but the City Council voted it down. Moran stated that he suggested at a previous meeting that specific amounts for violations could be included in the good neighbor contract. Nash-Hunt added that if there is language that indicates fine amounts, the City might rarely have to fine properties/guests.

Stockness added that language should be added to the good neighbor contract advising that its up to the Sheriff or Eli to collect the fine. She noted that the City still needs to put dog leash law signs up. Moran, however, acknowledged that the collection of fines is complicated. City Manager Naffah advised that it seems logical that the relationship is between the property manager and the guest. There is a contractual relationship, and because of that the property manager has more leverage to collect the fine.

Moran questioned that if he fines the guests, does the property manager then have to pay the City. A discussion regarding the responsibility of collecting fines occurred and that the amounts should not be astronomical. Moran suggested having the City take the license plate number down at the time of the incident and then mail a fine to the guest. Stockness advised that fines are one of the reasons why she thinks the City should have a copy of the rental agreement with all the pertinent information.

Naffah advised that one year the property manager can collect fines, and the next year the City can send fines to the guests. After two years a comparison could be done. Bruce agreed that a comparison could be done, however he added that if the City had a noise and leash ordinance with fines, the guest in violation should be fined by the City directly. He suggested that the City put in place specific dollar amount fines during the next ordinance amendment.

Stockness stated the City needs someone around for code enforcement. Naffah advised that COVID-19 is causing cities to lose revenue, so the City currently cannot afford it. Naffah also noted that violations can be processed differently, based on where the visitor is located whether on or off the premises.

***Motion (Nash-Hunt/Moran) to extend the meeting by 15 minutes. Passed (4-0). Passed unanimously.***

Bruce recommended that Committee members review the ordinance for the violations and work on adding a fine to each of them. He added that if they are included in the ordinance those liable can be added as well.

*Public Comment*

None

**No motion made.**

5. Per Council Resolution Authorizing STR Committee Purpose – “Analyze Benefits to Visitors.” Discuss What is Working with the Ordinance as Currently Written:

*This item was tabled.*

6. Identify and Prioritize Future Agenda Items and Review/Confirm Dates of Next Committee Meetings:

*Committee Member Discussion:*

Special meeting was scheduled on June 24<sup>th</sup>.

- Committee members agreed to review the ordinance for violations and work on adding a fine to each of them.
- Agenda Item 5
- Committee members agreed to look through the ordinance on their own time and determine what definitions need clarification in the ordinance.

*Public Comment*

None

**No motion made.**

**V. Request for Future Items**

Discussed in agenda item number six.

**VI. Adjournment**

*Motion (Stockness/Moran) to adjourn. Passed (4-0). Passed unanimously.*

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm. Next meeting scheduled for June 24, 2020 at 5:30 pm.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

**Angela Zetter**  
**Administrative Assistant**



**Dick Bruce**  
**STR Committee Chair**